

## The Gate - A. L. Lester

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**Tag line:** *A Free Lost in Time universe short story. Mystery, paranormal shenanigans and gay romance in 1920s rural England.*

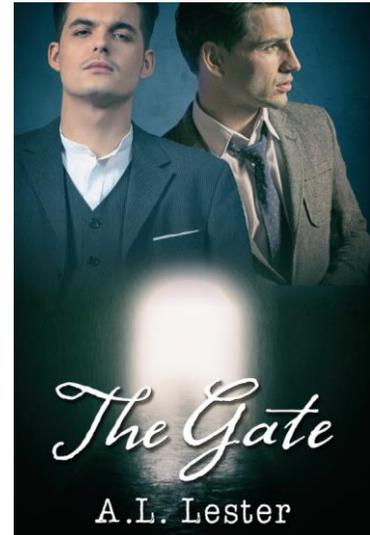
**Genre:** MM, gay, romance, historical, paranormal, suspense

**Length:** 7.5k

**Publisher:** JMS Books

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**Download:** <https://dl.bookfunnel.com/smkivgat61>



## Blurb

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It's 1918, and Matty returns home to the family farm from the trenches only to find his brother Arthur dying of an unknown illness. The local doctor thinks it might be cancer, but Matty becomes convinced it's connected to the mysterious books his brother has left strewn around the house.

Matty confides his suspicions in his friend Rob, who's also come back to the farm from the Western Front. Rob has realised something odd is happening on the farm. He's found something that looks like a gate of some kind, something Arthur

referenced in his papers which may rest at the heart of his illness. But a gate to where?

Matty and Rob were friends before the war. Now they're both changed by what they've been through. Will the mysterious energy swirling round the farm blow out the ember of attraction between them, or ignite it?

*A 7,500 word short story set in the Lost In Time Universe.*



Ally is currently working on a sequel to this with a working title *Inheritance of Shadows*, that's serialised free every month for her newsletter subscribers.

## Excerpt

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The tap at the kitchen door took him unaware and he carried the bottle of brandy out with him to answer it. It was Rob. Matty stepped back in silent invitation and let him in. "All right?" Rob asked, quietly.

"Not really. Do you want a drink?" Matty gestured to the bottle he'd set on the table.

Rob looked at him with narrowed eyes and nodded. "I'll join you." He'd been promoted up to sergeant in the Signal Corp, Matty remembered, in a disconnected sort of way.

"Come on through. I was in his study."

Rob hesitated. The farm men never came any farther into the house than the kitchen. But it was an unusual day. In front of the sideboard, Matty slopped some more out of the bottle into another dusty glass and proffered it. Rob took it and sat where Matty gestured, on the worn leather settee. Neither spoke. It was a comfortable kind of silence.

He and Rob had always got on, in the way of single men. They'd gone to the pub together sometimes and taken a couple of local sisters on Courting Walks through the bluebell woods as a pair, a long time ago. Matty hadn't been particularly interested in Marie Booth and he didn't think Rob had been much interested in her sister Clemmie, either, probably for the same reason. Matty had made sure never to look at him like that, though. He didn't need that sort of trouble on his doorstep.

But now he really looked at the other man, comfortably sprawled opposite him. Looking back, they'd been inseparable. Four years of muddling through in the trenches and taking soldier's comfort in a few minutes here and there, furtive and messy behind the lines, had snapped something in him. He didn't really care overmuch what people thought of him, not anymore. And he suspected a lot of other people were the same. When you'd had boys too young to be away from their mothers die in your arms, you learned to grasp for any comfort or happiness when it appeared and damn the consequences.

"I was just checking on you." Rob said quietly. "I can go if you like."

"No, don't go. I appreciate the company. I just haven't got much talk left in me."

"No need to talk with me, Matty, you know that." Rob's smile was slight but genuine. He turned to small talk. "Cows are milked. I left the churns in the dairy, though. It's too warm to put them out tonight. We'll need to do something about the

back of the barn before the winter. There's gaps of light coming in through that red stone wall. The brick's crumbling away."

They made desultory conversation for a half hour and Matty's eyes started to droop. "You need to sleep, lad." He could hear a small, genuine smile in Rob's voice.

"I do." He stood and put his glass on the sideboard. "Thank you."

"Any time. Just ask. Whatever you need." Rob stood quietly beside him, stalwart and solid and so very comforting. They faced each other. Rob raised his hand to the back of Matty's neck and Matty stepped forward into the embrace. Rob's other arm came around him and settled him, forehead against that broad shoulder, smelling of hay and good sweat. It was such a relief to have someone else take his weight for a little while. Neither moved. After a little while, Matty felt Rob press a soft kiss against the top of his head. He was hard in his corduroys, against Matty's hip, and Matty felt himself stirring in response. "Get some sleep. It'll all look different in the morning." The arms fell away with a passing caress to his nape and they stepped apart.

## About A. L. Lester

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A. L. Lester likes to read. Her favourite books are post-apocalyptic dystopian romances full of suspense, but a cornflake packet will do there's nothing else available. The gender of the characters she likes to read (and write) is pretty irrelevant so long as they are strong, interesting people on a journey of some kind. She lives in the south-west UK with Mr AL, two children, a permaculture vegetable garden and a dachshund.

She sees herself as: parent, queer, gardener, author, spouse, daughter, beer-maker, disabled, ex-goose-keeper, carer, procrastinator. Short tempered non-binary control freak.

## Links

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**All my links are gathered here (this is by far the easiest!):** <https://lnk.bio/gjD5>

**Or pick and choose:**

**Webpage:** <https://allester.co.uk>

**Email:** [ally@allester.co.uk](mailto:ally@allester.co.uk)

**Newsletter:** <https://www.subscribepage.com/allester>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/CogentHippo>

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